

THE SKIFF



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RENEW PEER
SUPPORT GROUP IS
IMPROVING CAMPUS
MENTAL HEALTH

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FORT WORTH, TEXAS

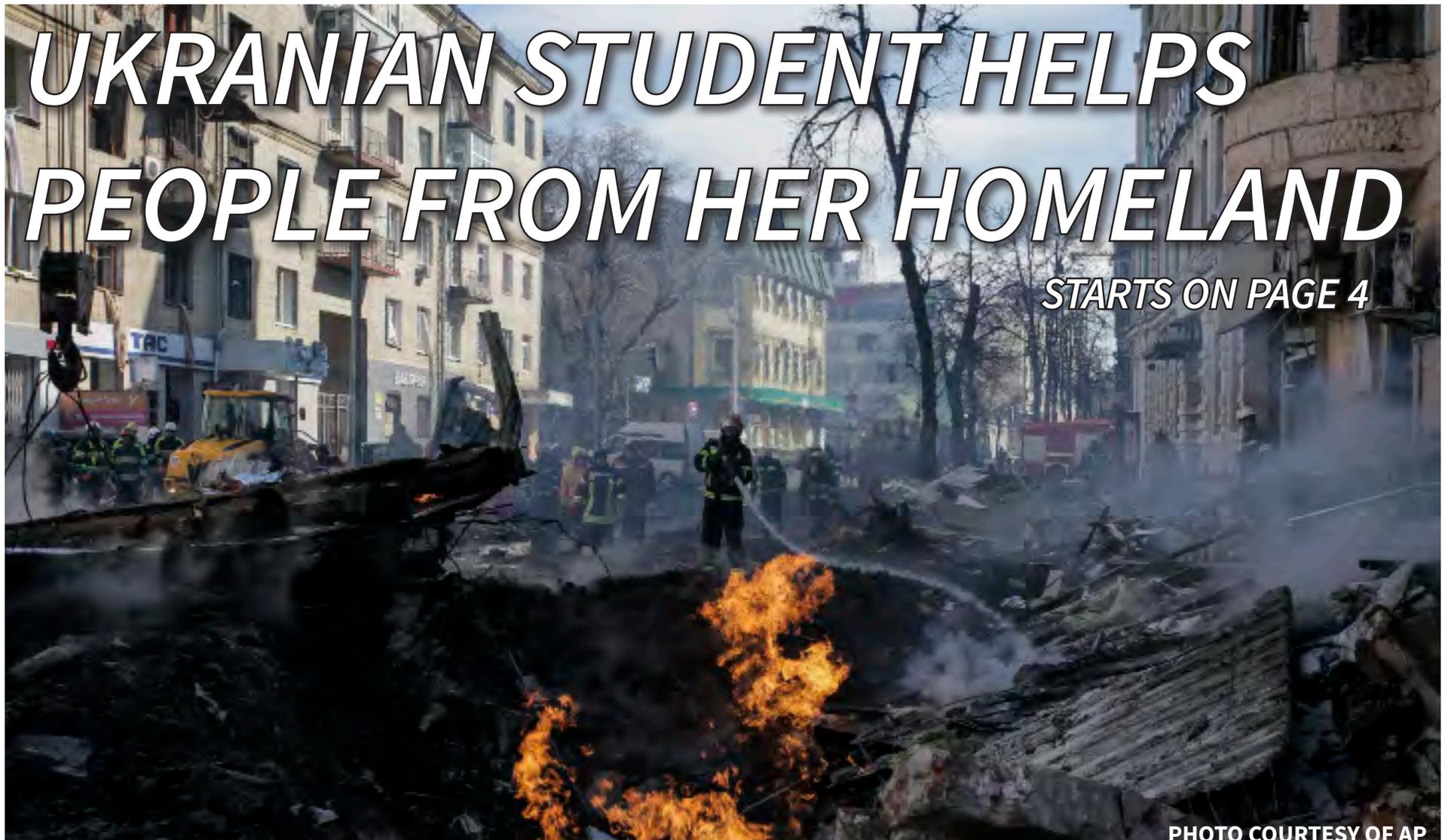


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CAMPUS NEWS

What no college student wants to talk about: STDs

By SIENA DANCSECS

STAFF WRITER, TCU 360

Last spring, a rumor dominated conversations across TCU's campus: a first-year student had contracted HIV and triggered a campus outbreak.

Even though there was no truth to it, TCU medical officials were frustrated not only with the rumor but also with what wasn't being discussed: how to prevent the spread of STDs.

"There is no such thing as safe sex, just safer sex," said Ruthie Kested, a physician assistant at the Brown-Lupton Health Center. The health center, which distributes condoms,

provides testing and sexual health counseling, is TCU's first line of defense.

Half of all reported STD cases in the United States involve people ages 15 to 24, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The most common STDs seen on college campuses, TCU included, are Human Papillomavirus (HPV), Chlamydia and Gonorrhea.

"Sexually transmitted diseases are commonly spread amongst young people, especially on college campuses," said Kested.

Even though STDs are more common in young people than many people believe, there continues

to be significant resistance toward testing due to negative stigmas.

Increasing STD awareness and testing is crucial, and the health center is here to help. "We offer asymptomatic testing for all TCU students," Kested said. "Students can call the health center and set up an appointment anytime. It can be just a lab visit with a nurse, or they can see a provider as well."

Leaving an STD untreated poses a serious health risk and increases the possibility of infecting others, according to the Tarrant County Public Health Department.

If a TCU student finds that they have contracted an STD,

Kested suggests that they make an appointment for testing and treatment at the health center.

Additionally, if a student comes in because he or she has been possibly exposed, the clinic will treat them right away, even if they do not have a positive test result yet.

Dr. Kested and the staff at the health center would like to remind students to be mindful, be thoughtful and be smart. TCU students should get tested for STDs regularly and use protection such as condoms.

"It is important that we, as TCU, keep repeating this message," Kested said. "It is crucial as an institution. Safer sex!"

Binge drinking: An epidemic at colleges across the country

By SIENA DANCSECS

STAFF WRITER, TCU 360

"Work hard, play hard," as they say, has evolved into "work hard, party harder" on college campuses across the country.

As harmless as drinking may seem during college, many students participate in binge drinking and alcohol misuse. According to a student survey conducted by the Collegiate Recovery Community in 2019, 11% of TCU students indicated that they were concerned with their use of alcohol and drugs.

With binge drinking and alcohol misuse on the rise, TCU's student services have been prepped and are ready to

help and educate.

"College students need to start changing their relationships with alcohol and substances," said Kendall Drummond, a senior and advocate for the Collegiate Recovery Community. "All of the resources here on campus are here to help you. Seek them out first, before you get into trouble."

Alcohol consumption, including binge drinking, has increased since the beginning of the pandemic, according to Boston University. In 2020, alcohol consumption was up 14% from 2019. Lockdowns also significantly increased alcohol sales.

TCU housing has seen an increase in binge drinking on campus,

resulting in an increase in Alcohol Violations (AVs).

Kendall Drummond, a 22-year-old senior psychology major, is an active member of the community. She is also an advocate on campus and within her sorority communities.

"Our group models healthy relationships with substances and talks about making responsible choices," Drummond said. "It's just easier to listen to people your own age."

Oftentimes, it is most important to get to the root of the issue. "It's more than the fact that they're consuming so much alcohol. It's about why they aren't making good choices," Allen said.

Resources on campus such as the Counseling and Mental Health Center and Collegiate Recovery Community are great resources for students seeking help.

Binge drinking represents an unhealthy relationship with alcohol, which is something that Drummond and other advocates on campus are working to change.

"Our recovery community is not necessarily just about making huge changes, they can be small," said Drummond. "For students who are 21, it can be about understanding that you can go out and have two drinks and have fun."



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Distribution: Newspapers are available free on campus and surrounding locations, limit one per person. Additional copies are \$.50 and are available at the Skiff office.

The Skiff is an official student publication of Texas Christian University, produced by students of TCU and sponsored by the TCU Department of Journalism. It operates under the policies of the Student Media Committee. The Skiff is published Thursdays during fall and spring semesters except finals week and holidays.

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The Skiff

Circulation: 1,000

Subscriptions: 817-257-6274

Rates are \$30 per semester.

Moudy Building South

Newsroom, Room 212

2805 S. University Drive, Fort Worth, TX 76109

CAMPUS NEWS

Peer support community works to improve mental health on campus

By **Grace Reinhardt**

STAFF WRITER, TCU 360

Jarvis Hall has become the home base for Renew – Depression and Anxiety Peer Support Community.

Even though young adults in college have always experienced

depression and anxiety, COVID-19 has increased the severity, said Adry Sanders, a TCU triage, crisis and licensed professional counselor.

Anxiety and depression elements rose 5.1% in adults from August 2020 to February 2021, according to

the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

At TCU, Sanders said she has noticed changes in motivation to do well and follow-through, as well as an increase in social anxiety.

One reason Renew was formed was to give students an outlet to communicate during COVID-19 and online school. Legally, counselors can only practice within their state, so when students move away, they may no longer have that outlet, Sanders said.

“We knew that there was going to be this need where we couldn’t completely terminate counseling, we just had to pivot what we could

offer,” said Sanders.

Though Renew began over Zoom, it now occurs in Jarvis Hall from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. every Wednesday.

The meeting is structured to give people an opportunity to share their week’s events and discuss topics chosen over GroupMe, said Manie Blewett, Renew member and sophomore early childhood education major.

“One [topic] we might talk about is dealing with grief,” said Blewett. “We all pick topics in our GroupMe before we go to Renew.”

Blewett learned about Renew after her boyfriend encouraged her to visit the TCU Counseling & Mental

Health Center. Blewett said she was nervous to join, but she now feels refreshed when she attends the meetings.

Blewett said she was worried about knowing people in the group and what they might think or say of her, but she soon discovered that the community is committed to maintaining confidentiality. The meeting’s closing statement affirms that no one will discuss the conversations outside the community’s meeting, said Blewett.

“I wasn’t going to tell that person’s story, and I knew they weren’t going to tell mine,” said Blewett. “I trust that no one in the group is going to do that because we’re all struggling with our

own stuff, and we want to help each other.”

The community is a place where people can be themselves, said Brentley Autry, a licensed professional counselor at TCU.

“They can come show up as who they are and get a little bit of extra support during the week,” said Autry.

Autry said that being a part of the community is different from one-on-one therapy because of peer perspective, idea variety and increased dialogue.

“I think somebody that’s your age going through something so similar to you is really what’s the most impactful thing about Renew,” said Autry.



PHOTO BY GRACIE REINHARDT

Students participate in equine therapy in the Commons.

Students come together to spread acts of kindness across campus

By **SARA LITTLEJOHN**

STAFF WRITER, TCU 360

Students have been able to come together and spread small acts of kindness across campus by bringing awareness to mental health through Impact of Words, an organization entering its second semester on campus.

“A lot of people struggle at TCU with finding a group or an organization that they feel comfortable coming to,” said Jackson Donaldson, Impact of Words president and sophomore marketing major. “I wanted to be able to provide an organization that people can come to and destress. We usually try to have people

meet someone new each week so you are gaining more friends as you come longer. You are not only getting to know someone, but you are doing good while getting to know someone.” Donaldson stressed the importance of finding lifelong friendships through Impact Words.

“The goal of it is to not necessarily solve mental health, it is to raise awareness and focus on the idea that there are things to be grateful for,” said Donaldson.

In conjunction with activities to raise awareness, TCU Impact of Words also puts on fundraisers for the cause. Last semester, the organization created “Glad You’re Here”

t-shirts and sold them to TCU students. Donaldson and his team had over 740 people sign up for t-shirts. Impact of Words raised \$10,000 and donated \$4,000 of that to an organization called “Keep the Spark Alive”.

Keep the Spark Alive is an organization dedicated to Chad Harrell, a friend and fellow high school lacrosse teammate of Donaldson’s. Harrell took his own life in 2017. His parents created the “Keep the Spark Alive” Foundation (KTSA) in his honor.

KTSA was originally created to provide scholarships for fellow lacrosse players, but it has since developed into an organization

determined to prevent teen suicide.

Donaldson started Impact of Words during his junior year of high school in Leeward, Kansas.

“I’ve realized that a lot of people were moving past what happened and that is such a scary thing for someone to feel so low about themselves,” said Donaldson. “I want to find a way to spread positivity so that people feel cared for, valued and loved in their community. I think about Impact of Words and if Chad would still be here today if he felt valued and cared for in the manner that we are trying to express. I’m not sure of the answer, but I think that is what is constantly



PHOTO COURTESY OF TCU IMPACT OF WORDS

Students gathered at a meeting writing positive messages on sticky notes to put up around campus.

pushing me towards what we are doing.”

TCU Impact of Words has been donating all the money that they have raised to KTSA.

To get in contact with the organization, reach out to its official Instagram: @tcuimpactofwords.

“Instagram is really

big for us because we are trying to market people to come to meetings,” said Donaldson. “Social media is such an interesting place for a lot of anxiety and depression to foster.”

The group meets on Tuesdays 6:30-7:30 p.m. in the BLUU private dining room east.

IN-DEPTH REPORTING

Student from Kyiv drops everything to help people in her homeland

By JD PELLIS

Executive Editor, TCU 360
and

HAEVEN GIBBONS

Managing Editor, TCU 360

Last year seems so far away.

Then, there was peace in Ukraine. Raya Shelashska, 39, remembers being with her family in the botanical garden in Kyiv enjoying the music and the food.

“The way you feel in Kyiv is very special,” said Shelashska, a TCU student pursuing a doctoral degree in psychology who was born and raised in the city.

Shelashska was born in the Soviet Union in 1982. By the time she was 10 years old the Iron Curtain had fallen, and Ukraine was established as a sovereign nation. Shelashska never knew a Ukraine that wasn’t free.

On the morning of Feb. 24, Russia invaded Ukraine. Air sirens wailed in Kyiv as missiles struck at least 25 cities, including Kyiv. One month later, Russia has only heightened its aggression against Ukraine.

“The first couple of days it was just a shock,” Shelashska said. “I did not believe it was happening for real in the 21st century.”

“Only air ride sirens break the silence.

You won’t hear kids laughing or the noise of busy streets. It looks like a ghost city.”

-RAYA SHELASHSKA

TCU DOCTORAL STUDENT AND KYIV NATIVE

While she’s 6,000 miles away from the fighting, the horrors of war are present everyday for her as she tries to reach family members and tailor her research to easing the trauma facing Ukrainians.

‘My last home’

During the first week, Shelashska spent 10 hours a day on the phone with family, friends, colleagues and the families she had worked with when she ran nonprofits in Kyiv.

Shelashska has begged her parents to leave Kyiv for a safer part of Europe, but they refuse.

“My dad, he says, ‘This is my last home. I’m not going anywhere.’”

“And I understand that,” Shelashska said. “When you get older you have your roots deep.”

Her parents live in a village where the roads lead to Kyiv.

“This is something that concerns me,” she said. “If they will have Russian tanks, they will take one of those streets, maybe both of those streets to get to Kyiv.”

Entire neighborhoods 15 miles northwest of her parents’ village have been wiped out from heavy fighting. There is also combat 15 miles south.

Her parents can hear the fighting and the explosions.

They do not have a basement, so they shelter with friends. They rely on church volunteers to bring food and necessities. The military curfew requires them to stay inside in the morning, evening and night.

Ukraine is seven hours ahead of Fort Worth. Shelashska stays up late anticipating the sunrise in Ukraine and the text from her mom:

“We’re fine.”

“We’re alive.”

“We’re OK.”

Her mother has left for a safer place. But even after watching nearby houses turn to rubble and ash, her father won’t budge. On day 34, her parent’s house still stands in Sviatopetriviske, a Kyiv suburb.

Shelashska’s mother-in-law and her aunt live 300 miles east of Kyiv in Kharkiv.

They also refuse to leave.

“I am just really scared that those who are staying there that the chances of surviving are going really smaller everyday,” Shelashska said. “But on the other side, I try to be optimistic, and I try to respect their decision.” Her mother-in-law tells the horrors of seeing fires with flames that reach the sky and explosions that keep getting louder.

“We lost electricity and heating for one day,” her mother-in-law told her.



PHOTO COURTESY OF RAYA SHELASHSKA

Raya Shelashska with her husband and kids.

“Ok guys it’s time to leave,” Shelashska responded.

They didn’t.

Urban warfare

Neighborhoods in Kharkiv and Kyiv in the north to Mariupol have become battlegrounds. These key cities were once home to about two-thirds of Ukraine’s pre-invasion population of 44 million people.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Ukraine leaders are trying to organize stable humanitarian corridors for Mariupol residents to escape, but almost all attempts have been unsuccessful. Mariupol has come under naval attack after weeks of air and land strikes. Earlier this week, Ukraine rejected Russia’s demand to surrender the Mariupol in exchange for safe passage.

Shelashska has family in Mariupol. Her parents grew up there. Each summer her family would visit, and Shelashska would stay with her

grandma and her cousin Julia.

“We basically grew up together during the summer,” Shelashska said. She hasn’t heard from Julia or from many of her relatives in Mariupol since March 1.

Mariupol has no electricity, heating, cellular connection, water or food.

Melting snow to drink water and cooking on fires outside, people are just trying to survive.

“A lot of people just live in the basements, and it’s just really hard,” Shelashska said. “I can’t even imagine what they go through, and I just have no idea if my family is alive there.”

After over two weeks of silence, Shelashska heard from a cousin who has been hiding in a basement with her two young kids. They want to leave, but bombs or missiles hit Mariupol every 15 minutes.

Some did leave in time to escape.

Shelashska’s twin sister, her husband and their five kids left

Ukraine for safety in central Europe.

In the first week of the invasion, more than a million Ukrainian refugees crossed borders into neighboring countries. As the war continues, an estimated 4 million people may flee Ukraine, according to The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. A total of 3,626,546 refugees have left Ukraine since Feb. 24. Resources are stretched thin.

At least half of the capital’s population fled by March 10, according to Kyiv’s mayor; however, about two million people have stayed in Kyiv to stand in solidarity and defiance against Russian forces.

Shelashska convinced her adopted daughter, Karina, who has two young children, to flee Kyiv to western Ukraine. It was “a miracle” they agreed to go, she said.

They left just two weeks before the devastation.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

The only thing left of their home was a beige couch. Toys and a crib smoldered amid the ashes from a missile strike.

“It’s hard to see that the war just getting closer and closer to people you love,” said Shelashska. “That it’s not somewhere, but it’s right there.”

Life’s work tested

Kyiv is the place Shelashska fell in love. Started her family. Found her passion for psychology and fostering children.

In 2017, Shelashska came to TCU to pursue her master’s in child developmental trauma. Three years later, she brought her family to Fort Worth and settled in to pursue a doctorate in psychology.

Her twin sons are first-year students at TCU. Her husband works remotely with people in Ukraine. Her nine-year-old son is in third grade

at a Fort Worth ISD elementary school.

They planned to move back to Kyiv after Shelashska earned her degree. Now, she wonders if there will be anything to return to.

“I had this survival guilt that I am here safe with my family,” Shelashska said.

Shelashska and her husband sent money to their family in Ukraine and started to figure out other needs to meet.

As a clinician, Shelashska realized she could help send protocols to psychologists for trauma intervention.

At TCU’s Karyn Purvis Institute of Child Development, Shelashska conducts research to understand how Trust-Based Relational Intervention, an attachment-based, trauma-informed intervention for caregivers of children who have experienced trauma, strengthens relationships and helps children learn to

regulate themselves more effectively.

Shelashska’s life work has been and continues to be to help children heal from complex developmental trauma, said her research advisor and TCU associate professor of psychology Danica Knight.

Shelashska has experience as a practitioner and expert in her field of child welfare, working as a director of three different foster care-related international NGOs since 2006.

After earning her master’s in developmental trauma from TCU in 2017, Shelashska received advanced training in a method called Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing, which is designed to resolve unprocessed traumatic memories in the brain in fewer sessions than other psychotherapies.

In recent weeks, Shelashska has been using her experience to help people in her home country overcome trauma and prevent PTSD.

For most of the day, Shelashska lives virtually in Ukraine, connecting with people in Ukraine to provide counseling and support.

“I can’t wait to go to bed in the evening and forget about this nightmare, at least while I’m sleeping,” Shelashska said. “It’s hard to hear what they went through... all of the stories, they are just unimaginable.”

Some of her professors have brought meal trains to her and her family.

“Her compassion for children who’ve experienced trauma and her many years of experience working with vulnerable children



PHOTO COURTESY OF RAYA SHELASHSKA

Raya Shelashska’s twin sons Vlad and Ross hand out flyers and Ukrainian flags outside the BLUU to raise awareness and encourage people to donate and support humanitarian efforts in Ukraine.

in Ukraine gives her a unique perspective on her studies,” said Knight.

Shelashska has begun to shift her focus toward developing tools and resources that can help people in Ukraine.

Shelashska’s research is changing course.

“While her primary motivation for staying connected to people in Ukraine is to help them cope today in this moment, she’s gaining profound insights into what caregivers and children are experiencing, what their needs are and what the effects might be long-term,” Knight said. “These insights will be immensely helpful as she begins to develop companion tools to TBRI to address acute trauma and support healthy attachment as part of her doctoral work.”

As Shelashska takes action, she hopes others will too.

“It’s really important for people across the globe to use their voice and to stand up and say, ‘It’s not OK,’ and if you can donate please do, if you can pray please do, if you can use any of your skills and talents to help us please do, but please don’t stay away,

and please don’t turn away from us. That’s.... that’s the biggest fear,” she said.

Another way to fight

One of her sons, Vladyslav (Vlad) Shelashskiy, a psychology major, worked with friends to set up an information and donation desk for Ukrainians in the Brown-Lupton University Union.

“I wanted to contribute to Ukraine’s fight for its future and help save innocent lives, so I decided to start by raising awareness about the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine and the ways members of the TCU community can make a difference,” Shelashskiy said. “I decided to do this because I was deeply hurt by witnessing innocent Ukrainian civilians die by the thousands as the result of Russian aggression and seeing the country I love being razed to the ground by Russian bombs and rockets.”

TCU’s international community is organizing an on-campus Humanitarian Crisis in Ukraine Awareness Event, which will take

place in the Intercultural Center Monday, April 11, from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

The event will feature Ukrainian TCU students speaking about their experiences with the people in crisis and the perspectives of their friends and families in Ukraine.

Like Shelashska and her sons, thousands of Ukrainians living in the United States are helping their homeland, refusing to give up.

But Shelashska said Ukraine can’t fight this fight alone.

“My biggest fear is that the world will get used to the idea that we have a war and they will turn away and it’s going to be just us left there, and without the support we will not last long,” Shelashska said.

It is more than a fight over land; it is a fight for democracy and the right to choose their direction, Shelashska said.

“We don’t want to give up everything and say, ‘OK, you can call us Russia now,’ because it’s our land. We love our country, we love our culture, we love our language, we love our food, we love our houses, we love our Ukraine,” Shelashska said.



PHOTO COURTESY OF RAYA SHELASHSKA

Karina’s apartment after being hit by a missile.

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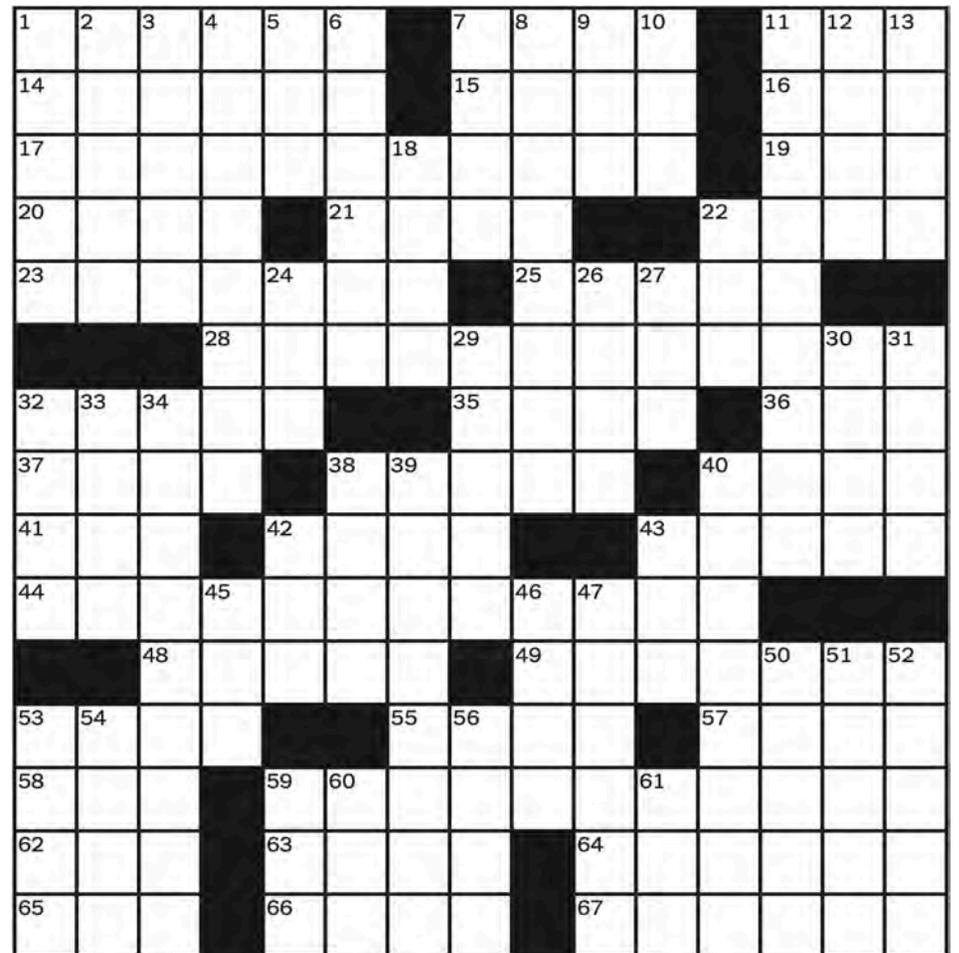
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57 Medieval club
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66 Monocle, basically
67 Apartment building V.I.P.s
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2 Became apparent
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6 See 31-Down
7 Handled sharp objects?
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12 Feature of Arthur Ashe Stadium since 2016
13 Has
18 Youth health and safety org.
22 Resting place
24 Chinese dynasty from 206 B.C. to A.D. 220
26 Keystone Kops, e.g.
27 What makes you unique
29 Band with the first platinum-selling double album
30 Northernmost county of Pennsylvania
31 With 6-Down, former White House press secretary portrayed by Melissa McCarthy on "S.N.L."
32 Donation receptacles
33 Source of a purple purée
34 Washing machine that opens upward
38 Analogy words
39 Window, of a sort
40 Gets foggy
42 Leaf-cutter, e.g.
43 2008 bailout recipient
45 Abolish
46 Leave out
47 Both consonants in "geek" phonetically
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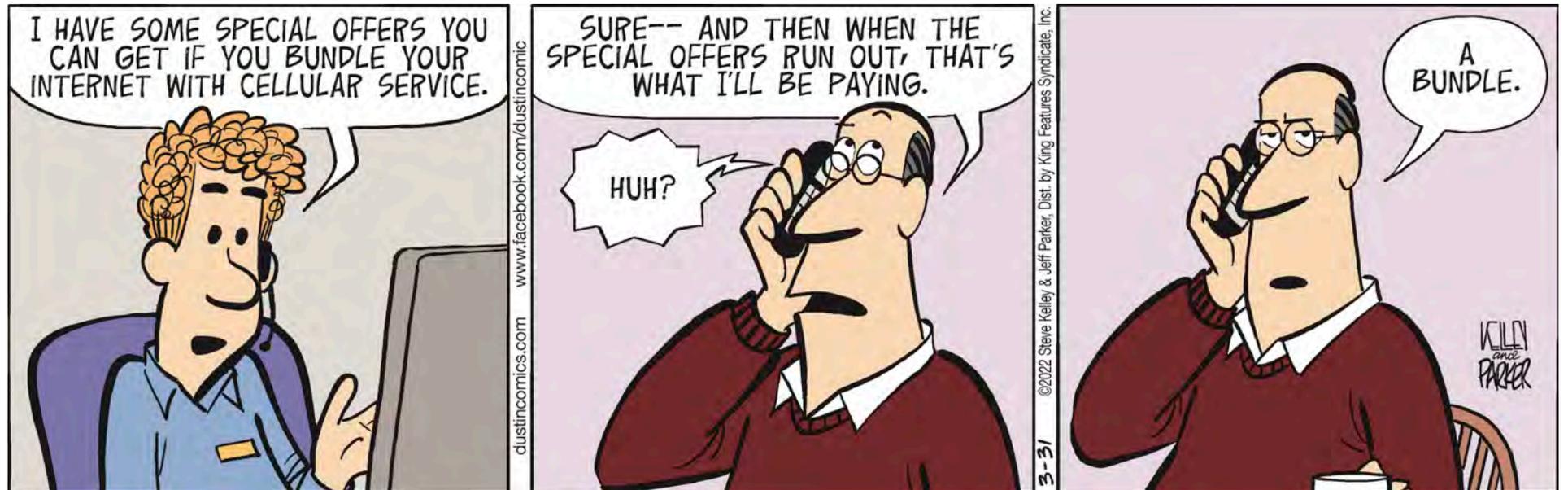
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Dustin by Steve Kelley and Jeff Parker



Horoscope

The Stars Show the Kind of Day You'll Have: 5-Dynamic; 4-Positive; 3-Average; 2-So-so; 1-Difficult

ARIES (March 21-April 19) ★★★★★ This New Moon is in Aries, which makes this the best time of year for you to take a realistic look in the mirror and ask yourself how you can improve the impression you create on your world. How can you improve your appearance? Ideas? Tonight: Communicate.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20) ★★★★★ The New Moon today indicates you will have a heightened interest in the hidden meaning of things and mysterious subjects like the occult, paranormal activity, spiritual explorations and things that go bump in the night. Tonight: Investigate.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20) ★★★★★ This New Moon is all about friendships for your sign. Are you a good friend to others? Would you want to have you as a friend? If you want more friends, be friendly! Hang out with quality people, because your friends will influence your future. Tonight: Be friendly.

CANCER (June 21-July 22) ★★★★★ Once a year, the New Moon takes place at the top of your chart. That time has arrived! It's the perfect opportunity to give serious thought to your long-term direction. Are you headed where you want to go? Do you want to go somewhere different? Tonight: Be dutiful.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22) ★★★★★ This New Moon is your perfect opportunity to think about what further education can boost your chances in your job or your

life enjoyment. Also consider how you might travel and explore more of the world. Tonight: Explore!

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) ★★★★★ This current New Moon is a great chance to clean up loose details and paperwork regarding taxes, debt, and insurance issues. You might negotiate a new arrangement about shared property. Tonight: Check your finances.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22) ★★★★★ This is the only New Moon all year opposite your sign, which means it's the best time to think about how to improve your relations with spouses, business partners or close friends. For your own benefit, you must be as good for your partner as he or she is for you. Tonight: Cooperate.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21) ★★★★★ This New Moon is a

great chance to think about how you can get organized and be more efficient in everything you do -- your work, your job, your hobbies, your home and your pursuit of knowledge. Tonight: Work.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21) ★★★★★ The New Moon is in a playful part of your chart urging you to create a balance between work and play. We are a work-oriented society. Some countries enjoy two-hour lunches with a siesta! Explore your creative talents. Tonight: Socialize.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) ★★★★★ Each New Moon is an opportunity to make resolutions. This New Moon is your chance to think about how you can improve your home and where you live, as well as how you can improve your family relationships. These things matter. Tonight: Home and family.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18) ★★★★★ This is the perfect day to explore how you can improve your communications with others. Are you a clear communicator? Do you listen to others? Or are you simply waiting for your turn to speak? Tonight: Study.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20) ★★★★★ Today's New Moon is a wonderful chance to think about your values in life. It's important to know this so you don't put your money on the wrong horse. You have to know what is important to you. Tonight: Review your assets.



COMMUNITY

Fort Worth mayor discusses city issues in on-campus interview

By **ALEXANDRA LANG**
POLITIFROG EDITOR, TCU 360

Fort Worth Mayor Mattie Parker discussed her first year in office and her outlook on the city's achievements and struggles in an on-campus interview with Texas Tribune CEO Evan Smith Wednesday.

The conversation covered a variety of topics, including COVID-19, crime, education and more.

Before her mayoral election last year, Parker served as chief of staff to her predecessor Betsy Price. She saw firsthand how the city handled the response to the

COVID-19 pandemic. She said she believes city officials managed the crisis to the best of their ability, and she “won’t play ‘Monday morning quarterback’” when discussing their efforts.

Parker lauded Fort Worth, especially in the crisis response to aid local businesses. “When we received CARES Act [funds], they took \$30 million and created small business grants across the city,” Parker said. “Rather than create a new program, they turned around and gave checks to people that needed them as fast as possible to try and keep businesses afloat.”

Smith questioned her regarding the rising homicide rate, which increased 30% in 2019. In Fort Worth, there were 118 homicides, the city’s highest recorded number in 27 years, Smith said.

“We do [have a problem with homicides],” Parker said. “In Fort Worth, our reality is not dissimilar from other American cities. I’m also leading an effort with the mayor of New York, through the U.S. Conference of Mayors, to co-chair a committee to focus on violent crime across the country. It needs to be a bipartisan conversation.”

They also discussed improving public education and how to ensure students’ success. Parker expressed her frustration with the statewide conversations surrounding education, arguing that many of the most hotly-debated issues are distracting us from the bigger, more pressing problems.

“I know one thing we’re not talking about [is] student outcomes and how kids are doing,” Parker said. “We’re talking about everything else, and we’ve stopped talking about how our kids are performing in schools. I want our focus to be on making sure

students are reading at grade level, making sure they can do algebra in the eighth grade the way they need to, and importantly, what is their path out of high school to make sure they’re successful in the economy.”

During the Q&A session following the formal interview, one audience member asked Parker about her position regarding Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). This executive order, issued by President Barack Obama in 2012, gave immigrant youth brought to the country children relief from deportation.

It has endured a turbulent path in the courts, and despite the Biden administration’s efforts to revitalize it, a court in Texas ruled last year that it was an illegal overreach of power by Obama. Still, the order did not enforce immediate action, and the judge said that the federal government should not take any action on immigration that it “would not otherwise take.”

The policy would likely need congressional approval in order to be considered settled law.

When Smith pressed Parker for her own views on DACA, creating a hypothetical scenario where he pretended to be Rep. Kay Granger and asking Parker to give advice on how to vote on the policy, she voiced her support.

“Yes, absolutely [they] should be legal residents,” Parker said.

While in office, Parker said she is committed to

remaining nonpartisan, though she acknowledges her background and work in Republican politics and describes her personal views as being aligned with that party. Still, Parker expressed some opinions which diverge from her party’s official platform.

“I support Medicaid expansion 100%, and I realize that it’s an incredibly difficult policy area and that may be unpopular with some people of the party of which I used to identify with,” Parker said. “But I can tell you right now [...] in Fort Worth, you have families without health insurance simply because we have not expanded Medicaid. And there’s not been an alternative presented in the state of Texas to replace Medicaid expansion, so I simply ask the question ‘What are we going to do about it?’”

Smith — who has also interviewed politicians ranging from President Obama, Sen. Ted Cruz, Rep. Beto O’Rourke and Gov. Rick Perry — said he was excited to return to TCU because “it’s a public square for Fort Worth” that brings the community together to discuss complex subjects.

“What government does or does not do, what government does for you and to you — at the federal, state and local level — has never been more important,” Smith said. “It’s important in normal times, and it’s especially important in abnormal times. And these have been abnormal times.”



PHOTO BY ALEXANDRA LANG

Fort Worth Mayor Mattie Parker was interviewed by Texas Tribune CEO Evan Smith on Wednesday March 23, 2022 in the BLUU Ballroom.